



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ENRD

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2000

(202) 514-2008

WWW.USDOJ.GOV

TDD (202) 514-1888

**U.S. SUES COLONIAL PIPELINE FOR OIL
SPILLS IN NINE STATES**

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department on behalf of the EPA today filed suit against Colonial Pipeline Company, alleging the company violated the Clean Water Act by spilling about 3 million gallons of oil and petroleum products from its 5,300-mile pipeline.

The complaint filed today in U.S. District Court in Atlanta charges that Colonial illegally discharged petroleum products into waterways in nine states. Pipeline corrosion, mechanical damage, and operator error have resulted in numerous spills over the past 20 years, in Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, and New Jersey.

Atlanta-based Colonial Pipeline Company is the largest-volume pipeline transporter of refined petroleum products in the world, moving an average of 80 million gallons of petroleum products each day through an underground pipeline that stretches from Port Arthur, Texas, to Linden, N.J., where it terminates in the New York Harbor area.

The pipeline crosses numerous rivers, streams, and wetlands, and oil spills from the pipeline have put at risk a variety of aquatic systems. In one case, more than 950,000 gallons of diesel fuel spilled into the Reedy River in South Carolina, killing 35,000 fish and dispersing oil 34 miles downstream.

The lawsuit asks the court to order Colonial Pipeline to take several steps to prevent future oil spills:

- investigate the depth and condition of the dirt or other material that covers the buried pipeline and take action to address exposed and shallow pipe;
- inspect the pipeline for defects such as corrosion and cracks, and repair these defects in accordance with industry standards on a prompt schedule;
- inspect, upgrade and maintain the cathodic protection system, which controls corrosion, so that it complies with industry performance standards; and
- upgrade the pipeline's leak detection strategy and system.

The United States also is seeking significant civil penalties from Colonial Pipeline under the Clean Water Act, to serve as a monetary deterrent both to Colonial and others who might otherwise violate the statute. The Act authorizes a court to impose civil penalties of up to \$25,000 for each day of violation prior to January 1997, and \$27,500 per day for each day thereafter, or, alternatively, \$1,000 per barrel of oil spilled or \$3,000 per barrel in the case of gross negligence.

###

00-673